

those helpless people. I hope we come to the quick realization of the steps that must be taken to resolve this tragic conflict.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO WORKING WOMEN

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the Greenwood Business and Professional Club of Greenwood, Mississippi, and the working women who comprise its membership. The club was established on November 20, 1931, and will be holding its annual Women of Achievement Banquet on Thursday, October 22, 1998. It is my privilege to note that my daughter, Tyler Lott, a working woman in her own right, will provide the banquet's keynote address.

For nearly 67 years, the Greenwood Business and Professional Club has been a shining example of women helping women through countless programs and projects. More importantly, the members of this club are representative of working women across America who make invaluable sacrifices every day to strengthen the economy and fiber of our families, communities, states and nation.

Working women are found in virtually every profession, trade and vocation, and constitute well over 62 million members of the United States workforce. In fact, women-owned businesses account for approximately one-third of domestic firms and employ over 13 million people. Moreover, we should always remember that, in addition to women working in traditional businesses, women may be found working in homes throughout America making significant contributions each day through their occupation as homemakers.

As working women continue their service to America through professional, civic and cultural endeavors, it is fitting that we recognize their growing numbers, and congratulate these women who labor so tirelessly and effectively both inside and outside the home. Whether in business, industry, a profession, or as a homemaker, today's working women are vital role models for young women coast-to-coast who will help mold the future of this country.

I am honored to have this opportunity to commend our nation's working women, and to extend my most sincere thanks to the members of the Greenwood Business and Professional Club for its 67 years of achievement and service.

PASSAGE OF THE GOVERNMENT PAPERWORK ELIMINATION ACT

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, the Omnibus Appropriations bill that the Senate is about to consider contains the full text of S. 2107, the Government Paperwork Elimination Act, a bill I introduced in April along with Senators WYDEN, MCCAIN and REED. I want to

thank Senators MCCAIN, LOTT, WYDEN, and HOLLINGS for taking the time and effort to work with me in advancing this legislation. Without their active support and participation, this bill would not have progressed as far as it has.

Senators WYDEN, MCCAIN and REED joined me in introducing the Government Paperwork Elimination Act in May of this year. On July 15, 1998, I chaired a hearing on this legislation before the full Commerce Committee. Two weeks later, S. 2107 was marked up in the Committee with several modifications. On a voice vote, the bill as amended was ordered to be reported.

When the Senate returned to session after the August recess, a unanimous consent agreement was propounded on S. 2107. This unanimous consent request brought the bill to the attention of Senator THOMPSON, the Chairman of the Government Affairs Committee. Senator THOMPSON had concerns with the bill because of the extent to which it dealt with Federal agencies.

Despite the time constraints—the session was expected to end in two weeks—Senator THOMPSON generously offered to work with me to address some of his committee's concerns and ensure that the bill as offered did not conflict with current mandates on the Executive. Over the course of the last week in September, Senator THOMPSON and I modified S. 2107 to address the concerns raised in his committee. On Tuesday, October 7, S. 2107 as amended was added as an amendment to S. 442 by unanimous consent.

The Internet Tax Freedom Bill passed the Senate on October 8 and was sent to the House for consideration. However, because the House did not agree with some of the language contained in the bill, House Members proposed adding the text of the House passed Internet Tax Freedom Bill to the omnibus rather than passing S. 442 as amended.

On October 15th, the Senate passed S. 2107 independent of other vehicles. On the same day, the text of S. 2107 was included in the omnibus appropriations bill. The next day, October 16th, the Omnibus Appropriations bill was passed by Congress with the text of the Government Paperwork Elimination Act included therein.

This legislation amends the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 to allow for the use of electronic submission of Federal forms to the Federal government with the use of an electronic signature within five years from the date of enactment. It is intended to bring the federal government into the electronic age, in the process saving American individuals and companies millions of dollars and hundreds of hours currently wasted on government paperwork.

In order to protect the private sector and ensure a level playing field for companies competing in the development of electronic signature technologies, this legislation mandates

that regulations promulgated by the Office of Management and Budget and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration be compatible with standards and technologies used commercially in order to ensure that no one industry or technology receives favorable consideration. It also requires Federal agencies to accept multiple methods of electronic submission if the agency expects to receive 50,000 or more electronic submissions of a particular form. This requirement will ensure that no single electronic signature technology is permitted to unfairly dominate the market.

This legislation also takes several steps to help the public feel more secure in the use of electronic signatures. If the public is going to send money or share private information with the government, people must be secure in the knowledge that their information and finances are adequately protected. For this reason, my bill requires that electronic signatures be as reliable as necessary for the transaction. If a person is requesting information of a public nature, a secure electronic signature will not be necessary. If, however, an individual is submitting forms which contain personal, medical or financial information, adequate security is imperative and will be available.

This is not the only provision providing for personal security, however. Senator LEAHY joined me to help establish a threshold for privacy protection in this bill. The language developed by Senator LEAHY and I will ensure that information submitted by an individual can only be used to facilitate the electronic transfer of information or with the prior consent of the individual. Also included is legislation which establishes legal standing for electronically submitted documents. Such legal authority is necessary to attach the same importance to electronically signed documents as is attached to physically signed documents. Without it, electronic submission of sensitive documents would be impossible. Finally, the Government Paperwork Elimination Act requires that Federal agencies to send an individual an electronic acknowledgement of their submission when it is received. Such acknowledgements are standard when conducting commerce online. A similar acknowledgement by Federal agencies will provide piece-of-mind for individuals who conduct business with the government electronically.

As much as individuals will benefit from this bill, so too will American businesses. By providing companies with the option of electronic filing and storage, this bill will reduce the paperwork burden imposed by government on commerce and the American economy. It will allow businesses to move from printed forms they must fill out using typewriters or handwriting to digitally-based forms that can be filled out using a word processor. The savings in time, storage and postage will